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FM AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2341  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC

UNCLAS BRATISLAVA 000094

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE EEB/TPP/MTAA/ABT FOR MARCELLA SZYMANSKI AND JACK  
BOBO, OES FOR DANIELLE WOOD, EUR/ERA  
USDA/FAS FOR STEVE FROGETT  
WARSAW FOR FAS AND ECON SECTIONS  
PRAGUE FOR FAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [EUN](#) [TBIO](#) [KPAO](#) [LO](#)

SUBJECT: SLOVAKIA PLANS TO ABSTAIN ON FEBRUARY 25 EU  
BIOTECH CORN VOTE

REF: A. STATE 14566

[1](#)B. BRATISLAVA 9

[1](#)C. STATE 11910

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: When Econoff delivered reftel A demarche, longtime Embassy contact and Bt proponent Igor Ferencik, the Director of the Biosafety Department in the Slovak Ministry of Environment (MinEnv), was visibly distraught. Ferencik told Econoff he and State Secretary Miloslav Sebek favored approval of the two Bt corn varieties (Pioneer Hi-Bred International's 1507 for cultivation and Syngenta's Bt11 for cultivation, feed, and industrial processing). However, Ferencik said he was recently told by the other MinEnv State Secretary, Jaroslav Jakus, that Slovakia will abstain from the February 25 vote in the EU's DG Environment Regulatory Committee. Because the Department of Biosafety falls under Jakus's authority, his view prevails. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) According to Ferencik, Jakus stated his reasons were mostly personal: he did not want to offend his Greenpeace friends. If asked, Ferencik said Jakus would say the GOS abstention was a "political" decision. As indicated in reftel B, opposition to Bt in Slovakia tends to be sporadic and personal. Though the Green Party recently left the government coalition, Jakus's HZDS ties do not explain his opposition to Bt (nor do Sebek's SMER ties explain his support). Similarly, the Agriculture Ministry's Central Control and Testing Institute in Agriculture (UKSUP) has resisted Bt even though the HZDS-dominated ministry as a whole has maintained an openness to the technology. Most observers claim UKSUP's resistance to Bt is tied to the personal views of its leadership.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Econoff finally secured a meeting with the Director of UKSUP, Pavel Filkorn, after repeated attempts as indicated in reftel B. Filkorn professed an openness to Bt, highlighting the increase in Bt corn acreage from 30 hectares in 2006 to 949 hectares in 2007 and nearly 2,000 hectares in [1](#)2008. While the acreage increase is commendable, Filkorn was unable to explain why the number of users had actually decreased, a common complaint of Bt proponents who point to UKSUP's overbearing administrative requirements.

[1](#)4. (SBU) In response to reftel C, Ferencik said resource constraints prevented GOS participation at the February 23-27 Mexico City meeting on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. He added that a lawyer charged with biosafety legal issues recently joined his department and he hopes to be more active on this front in the future.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: Because Ferencik's approach to Bt is science-based, State Secretary Jakus's overly personal approach has frustrated the Biosafety Director. When the current government came to power, only two of the 28 department directors at the Ministry of Environment maintained their positions. Largely because of his acknowledged expertise in biosafety issues, Ferencik, a career government official, was one of those two directors. While Bt resistance in Slovakia has not coalesced into a large, organized movement, the move away from a vigorous, scientific approach toward the personal opposition of a few key officials could potentially open the door to an increasingly political Bt policy in Slovakia. END COMMENT.  
EDDINS